

There's no Christmas in Rhysea.

This is obvious: there is no Christianity, no god of everything and holy son in Rhysea.

There is no Saturnalia to send into obscurity with the introduction of Christmas; there was no creeping campaign for the erasure of pagan ways. So no Christmas; no Hanukkah, no Kwanza or even Saturnalia. But there are seasons in Rhysea, same as here, that mark about the same time as they do here, and even Rhysea celebrates the Longest Night.

Hold your friends tight, hold the people you love close, and sing, we're halfway, halfway, halfway out of the dark, my dears. The Longest Night marks the halfway point of the year -- the Longest Day is the new year, with the Rhysean idea that the world builds and builds itself into an epoch to usher in the new, making our summer solstice when they change their calendar year. It's a time of reflection and change, of evaluation of the good and the bad and the prompting of, *what will bear me through the other half of this cold season? What will see me through the darkness?*

It's a popular day for weddings and proposals, for children to be made when the answer to that question is *love, love*. It's meant to be a reflection on your mental peace and state as much as it is a check to your winter stores, a calculation of rations and reason. *So long as we don't exceed two jars a week of preserves, we should be able to last until we can plant new fruits once more. I've found myself drifting and spiraling, and I know that this worry can be alleviated with a stricter routine and a trip to the shore.*

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The tradition is to eat toast, scorched black on one side, and golden-pale on the other, with an egg, runny-yolked, cracked over the top of the golden side like a bit of sun.

Halfway dark, halfway back to the light. The tradition is to listen to stories from whatever bards happen through your town that night, and to feed them and offer them a place to rest. They will sing of days gone by, and all the good things that are sure to come, and you will give them a night of comfort and peace in return. The tradition is, if you're with a king, to host a feast where the room is so ablaze with candles that it seems to be summer already. The tradition is, if you're in a village or in a camp, with the Fretim, to build the biggest bonfire you can and host a party around it with those you call *friend*. The tradition is, no matter what path you walk, to light a candle when the night reaches its darkest, and to lift them up towards the sky as you throw your wants to the world, and sing, *we're halfway, halfway, halfway out of the dark, my dears.*

I hope that you have a wonderful day. You are so, so loved.